

Overview of the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement

- Who should sign the Agreement? Every County, Municipality, Special Purpose Tax District, and any other public emergency service provider. (This includes utilities if they lend/receive aid during a disaster) REMEMBER: A municipality or SPD can sign the Agreement separate from the county.
- Procedural Matters: When an entity signs the Agreement, three documents need to be returned to SCEMD. Those are: Page 15 of the Agreement (Signature page), Page 16 of the Agreement (Authorized Representative page), and Proof of Insurance (a copy of their policy, a letter from their carrier stating that participation in mutual aid is acceptable under their policy, a copy of the ordinance showing they are self-insured).
- What does the Agreement cover?
 - A clarification of how liability issues will be handled. The Agreement specifies that each party will be responsible for its own legal representation.
 - A requirement that each party be responsible for their own worker's compensation costs.
 - A schedule for reimbursement.
 - Procedures for actually lending/receiving aid under the Agreement.
 - A requirement for each participating entity to have insurance that will cover the agents of the entity during a mutual aid response.
 - REMEMBER: This is all just a framework. The Agreement does allow entities to "otherwise agree" on terms that better suit their needs. For example, a group of electric utility providers can agree to reimburse one another at a different rate than what the Agreement spells out.
- Why the Agreement should be signed?
 - It is a tool for mutual aid response. The Firefighter Mobilization Plan and the State Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan are both using the Agreement as the tool within their plans for dealing with the formalities of mutual aid.
 - There is a proof of insurance requirement. Accidents can and will happen.
 - Signing the Agreement DOES NOT supercede existing mutual aid agreements. It will supercede *once* entities decide to use the Agreement.
 - There is NO legal responsibility to respond. Entities REQUEST help. If an entity is unable to respond, they don't have to respond.
 - The Agreement DOES allow for entity-to-entity direct request and response. This offers protection to the entities that will do this without going through the State. This is NOT the preferred method of lending/requesting aid. At a MINIMUM, SCEMD and county EM's want the parties to notify the county EM that resources will be coming into or leaving the county. IF a request is made directly to SCEMD we will contact the county EM to either fill the request or verify that the county is unable to fill the request.
 - The possibility for a large-scale event is very real in every community and becoming more real. Terrorism, winter storms, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wild fires, etc are some of the real possibilities.
 - There is a FRAMEWORK for reimbursement so everyone will know beforehand how the money issue will be handled. This Framework is especially important in the event federal dollars become available. FEMA is

tightening the purse strings and following their own rules more strictly. FEMA will offer reimbursement based on the EXISTING or commonly used mutual aid agreement between entities. If entities use the Agreement during large-scale events then they will have a framework for FEMA to follow for reimbursement. If no mutual aid agreement is used, or if it is “reciprocal” then FEMA will honor the reciprocal agreement and federal dollars will be more difficult to obtain. Caveat: It is possible that FEMA will honor the reciprocal agreement (or any other common agreement) that two entities use on a day-to-day basis. The important reason for the Statewide Agreement is that it offers a formal agreement to be followed when two entities that do not normally lend/receive aid with one another find themselves in a mutual aid situation.

- The SMALL entities gain as much as the LARGE entities. The small entities are more likely to need assistance than the large ones due to lack of capability.
- EVERY entity can benefit from having the resources of multiple jurisdictions readily available. This will be especially important during a terrorist event or a “no notice” large-scale event. Almost every emergency response system within this state will be immediately inundated in these events. The Agreement creates a tool to call for help immediately and before local and state EOC’s can activate and begin to assist. The Agreement offers protection of a mutual aid agreement during those critical times.
- Horry County recently signed the Agreement. Wild fires broke out in the middle of November. If Horry County required *immediate* assistance from a neighboring signatory county, it could claim the expenses incurred by the assisting county under FEMA’s Fire Management Assistance Grant and be reimbursed at least 75% of their eligible costs.